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REPORT FROM THE SECRETARIAT OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity is providing this brief report for the information of the fifteenth regular session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA). The report covers activities since the 14th session of the CGRFA and focusses on inter-sessional activities relevant to the prioritised themes of the 15th meeting of the CGRFA as requested by its Secretariat.

II. RELEVANT INTER-SESSIONAL ACTIVITIES AND PROGRESS

(i) *The Bridging Agriculture and Conservation Initiative*

2. The Minister of Environment Brazil, Director General of UNEP, Executive Secretary of the CBD, Director General of Bioversity International, the Chair of IPBES, together with nine other senior representatives of governments and NGOs, launched the *Bridging Agriculture and Conservation Initiative* in Rio de Janeiro, 12 July 2013, to foster measurable change by expanding the dialogue, building the scientific evidence base and charting a clear path for collaboration between agriculture and conservation in reaching the post-2015 development goals.

(ii) *Access and benefit sharing*

3. The Joint Work Plan 2011-2020 of the Secretariats of the CBD and CGRFA guides their work and provides for collaboration to promote the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization and eventually, if desirable, the development of specialized instruments for the food and agriculture sector. The CBD Secretariat closely followed developments under the CGRFA, in particular discussions at its fourteenth regular session, and also participated as an observer in the Team of Technical and Legal Experts on Access and Benefit-sharing. The CBD Secretariat made a presentation on the Nagoya Protocol to the third session of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources, the seventh session of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources and the eighth session of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Representatives of the CBD and the CGRFA Secretariats also took part in a number of regional capacity-building workshops on the Nagoya Protocol organized by the CBD Secretariat in 2013 and 2014.

4. The Nagoya Protocol entered into force on 12 October 2014 and the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol was held in Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea from 13 to 17 October 2014¹. Decisions adopted by the Parties to the Protocol include a process on Article 10 of the Protocol (global multilateral benefit-sharing mechanism), which would take into account experiences from other multilateral mechanisms and relevant work of other processes; a Strategic Framework for Capacity-Building; and an awareness-raising strategy.

5. Under the memorandum of understanding between the Secretariats of the CBD and ITPGRFA, signed at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD, to further enhance collaboration in areas of mutual interest within their mandates, a Joint Initiative of cooperation was launched at the margins of the Rio+20 Earth Summit to support ratification of the Nagoya Protocol and its harmonious implementation with the ITPGRFA and its Multilateral System for Access and Benefit-sharing. The Joint Initiative foresees, *inter alia*, expanded joint capacity-building initiatives and continuation of preparation of joint materials on access and benefit-sharing for the harmonious implementation of instruments, continued coordination and sharing of expertise on information management for access and benefit-sharing and facilitation of greater interaction between memberships. In this context, the Secretariats of the Convention and the Treaty have jointly organised and undertaken a number of activities including high-level briefings, capacity-building workshops and

¹ <http://www.cbd.int/npmop1/>

side events. The CBD Secretariat also participated in events organised by the Treaty and *vice versa*. This included the joint briefing on progress in the implementation of the objectives of the CBD, as part of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity and to further efforts to improve coherence, co-organized by the CBD Secretariat and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs as a special event of the Second Committee of the United Nations General Assembly pursuant to resolution 67/212.

6. The CBD Secretariat followed developments under the Treaty such as the ongoing process of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group to Enhance the Functioning of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing. Both Secretariats are also engaged in discussions on opportunities to expand their partnership in relation to the development of the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House and the CBD Secretariat is participating in the Consultation on the Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture being undertaken in the context of the Treaty. The CBD Secretariat is also currently hosting a staff member of the Treaty Secretariat.

(iii) *Biotechnology and biosafety*

7. An expert group established by the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety was tasked with the development of guidelines on how to conduct environmental risk assessments of living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. The resulting “Guidance on Risk Assessment of Living Modified Organisms”² consists of a roadmap for risk assessment that is applicable to all types of living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology, with an emphasis on agricultural crops, and specific guidelines applicable to certain types of living modified organisms or traits such as agricultural crops resistant to abiotic stress, crops with multiple modified traits, and cultivated trees.

8. In decision BS-VII/12, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety at its seventh meeting held in Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea from 29 September to 3 October 2014 invited its Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to use the Guidance on Risk Assessment of Living Modified Organisms in actual cases of risk assessment and as a tool for capacity-building activities in risk assessment, and requested the Executive Secretary of the CBD to conduct capacity-building activities in risk assessment using a training package developed on the basis of the Guidance.

9. In that same decision, the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety recommended to the Conference of the Parties to the CBD a coordinated approach on the issue of synthetic biology taking into account that the provisions of the Cartagena Protocol may also apply to living organisms resulting from synthetic biology.

10. The twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD (COP-12), Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea, 6-17 October 2014, considered synthetic biology as a potential new and emerging issue. Document UNEP/CBD/COP/12/20³ provided an updated review of reports on the topic. Information document UNEP/CBD/COP/12/INF/11⁴ reviewed potential positive and negative impacts of components, organisms and products resulting from synthetic biology techniques on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and associated social, economic and cultural considerations. Information document UNEP/CBD/COP/12/INF/12⁵ considered possible gaps and overlaps with the applicable provisions of the Convention, its Protocols and other relevant agreements related to components, organisms and products resulting from synthetic biology techniques.

11. In its decision XII/24, the Conference of the Parties reaffirmed its decision XI/11 urging a precautionary approach when addressing threats of significant reduction or loss of biological diversity posed by organisms, components and products resulting from synthetic biology and, *inter alia*, urged

² UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/13/Add.1 at

<http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/meetings/documents.shtml?eventid=4715>.

³ <http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/cop/cop-12/official/cop-12-20-en.doc>

⁴ <http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/cop/cop-12/information/cop-12-inf-11-en.doc>

⁵ <http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/cop/cop-12/information/cop-12-inf-12-en.doc>

Parties and other Governments to establish, or have in place, effective risk assessment and management procedures and/or regulatory systems to regulate environmental release of any organisms, components or products resulting from synthetic biology. The Executive Secretary was requested to convene an Ad-Hoc Technical Expert Group with terms of reference that include, *inter alia*: working towards an operational definition of synthetic biology; considering the extent to which organisms, components and products of synthetic biology fall under the scope of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety; identifying if other national, regional and/or international instruments adequately regulate synthetic biology; identifying the potential benefits and risks; compiling best practices on risk assessment and risk management; and, identifying if existing arrangements constitute a comprehensive framework to address impacts. The Executive Secretary was also requested to convene a moderated open-ended online forum to support the work of the Ad-Hoc Technical Expert Group. Parties, other Governments, relevant organisations and stakeholders were invited to submit relevant information to the Executive Secretary to support this work.

(iv) *Animal, Plant, Forest and Micro-organisms/invertebrate resources*

12. The Fourth Edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook⁶ undertook a mid-term review of progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, including drawing on information generated under the various reviews under the *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*, and notably regarding assessing progress towards Aichi Biodiversity Target 13. The report also recognises that the scenario for food is the primary factor that will determine prospects for achieving the Mission of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (to take action by 2020 to halt the loss of biodiversity), whilst also noting the key role of biodiversity in the feasible achievement of sustainable food and agriculture systems. Internalisation of the ecosystem approach is implicit in achieving this outcome. CBD COP-12, in decision XII/6, noted that the fourth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook* identifies that progress towards sustainable food and agriculture is crucial in determining whether the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 will succeed, and recognized the reviewed Strategic Framework 2010-19 of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, addressing agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, with its mutually reinforcing objectives to eradicate hunger, food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty while sustainably managing and utilizing natural resources, as an important contribution to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011 - 2020 and the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and requested the Executive Secretary and invited the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to continue to strengthen their cooperation on relevant matters.

13. An assessment has been made of progress in implementation of the *Global Strategy for Plant Conservation*, including an analysis of progress towards each of its 16 targets⁷. It shows that progress is being made towards all the targets, but generally not at a sufficient rate to achieve the targets in full by 2020. CBD COP-12 considered progress in implementation of the *Global Strategy for Plant Conservation* and in decision XII/15, *inter alia*, urged Parties and invited other Governments, members of the Global Partnership for Plant Conservation and other stakeholders to enhance their efforts to implement the Strategy by promoting and facilitating communication, coordination and partnerships between all relevant sectors, as well as acknowledging that a range of approaches might be effective in helping to accelerate progress towards the targets of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation depending on the stakeholders, dedicated institutions or champions involved, as well as national circumstances. The same decision also identifies a number of areas where the activities of the Executive Secretary and partners could usefully strengthen their work to support implementation of the strategy.

⁶ <http://www.cbd.int/gbo4/>

⁷ <http://www.cbd.int/doc/publications/cbd-ts-81-en.pdf>

(v) *Relevant outcomes of the ninth regular meeting of the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-Related Conventions (BLG), 16 August 2014 in Warth, Switzerland*⁸

14. The ITPGRFA provided the meeting with an update on the outcomes of the Fifth Session of the Treaty's Governing Body and other recent developments of relevance. The Treaty's Governing Body endorsed the Secretariat's participation in the BLG for better coordination among the conventions, including on fund-raising and collaboration on IPBES. It also called for the mutually supportive implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on ABS and the Treaty, and expressed its willingness to establish a formal relationship with the Protocol's COP-MOP upon its establishment.

15. The meeting noted the long-standing collaboration between the Secretariat of the CBD and that of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), including a joint secretariat meeting in 2013 where the IPPC Secretariat expressed an interest in joining the BLG. The IPPC Secretariat attended the meeting, as an observer, and enlightened the BLG on IPPC's mandate and activities as they related to biodiversity.

16. The GEF Secretariat expressed its appreciation for the support and inputs received from the BLG members for the sixth replenishment and the development of the GEF Biodiversity Strategy. The Biodiversity Strategy Focal Area⁹ has 4 overall Focal Area Objectives comprised of 10 Programmes, many of which are relevant to joint areas of interest of the CBD and CGRFA, but particularly: Objective 2 (Reduce threats to globally significant biodiversity) and its Programmes 4 (Prevention, Control and Management of Invasive Alien Species) and 5 (Implementing the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety); Objective 3 (Sustainably use biodiversity) and its Programmes 7 (Securing Agriculture's Future: Sustainable Use of Plant and Animal Genetic Resources) and 8 (Implement the Nagoya Protocol on ABS); and Objective 4 (Mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production land- scapes and seascapes and production sectors) and its Programmes 9 (Managing the Human-Biodiversity Interface) and 0 (Integration of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services into Development & Finance Planning). One of the notable aspects of the new programming directions of GEF-6 is the inclusion of the Integrated Approach Pilots, which aim at addressing some of the underlying drivers of environmental degradation through special focus on food security, urbanization, and deforestation. The GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategy emphasizes, among others, synergies in the implementation of biodiversity-related conventions under the direction of the Strategic Plan on Biodiversity 2011 - 2020. BLG members agreed to identify common issues/countries/regions where they could undertake joint activities/projects.

17. Regarding information sharing and joint reporting. The online reporting system developed by UNEP- WCMC continues to undergo trials in order to resolve identified issues and bugs. For the ITPGRFA, while it has a fairly advanced reporting system for its Multilateral System, it is also exploring online national reporting possibilities and interconnection with others. The members of the BLG acknowledged the desirability of being better connected with other conventions and agreed to keep sharing information among themselves on progress in the development of information management systems and to explore opportunities for interoperability and interconnection, for instance, organized along the lines of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Members further agreed to bring members of the information and communication teams of the respective Secretariats together to hold a virtual meeting before the CBD COP 12 with a view to discussing opportunities for common messaging during the COP and afterwards, as well as possible future joint communication strategies on issues of common interest.

18. Members agreed that the IPBES Secretariat should be invited to next meeting of the BLG and to have a dedicated agenda item on IPBES cooperation, focusing especially on scientific and technological cooperation and the agreed thematic assessment on sustainable use.

⁸ <http://www.cbd.int/cooperation/BLG-9-rep-final-en.pdf>

⁹ the full text is available at: <http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/publication/GEF-6-BD-strategy.pdf>.

19. The meeting was updated on the negotiations related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals had concluded its work. Discussions would now move to the UNGA for the consideration and possible adoption of the SDGs. There are already discussions within the Technical Support Team to start working on indicators for the agreed SDGs and targets (noting in particular, in the current context, the relevance of the *State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture* is an important source of information and data). It was agreed that members should continue to coordinate and share information both during and after the adoption of the SDGs, and that the Secretariat of the CBD would solicit inputs from members for the development of indicators.

(vi) *Biodiversity and Human Health*

20. The Secretariat of the CBD and the World Health Organization, and other partners, are in the final stages of preparing a report on biodiversity and human health following its peer review (*Connecting Global Priorities: Biodiversity and Human Health, A State of Knowledge Review*). The report highlights the importance of genetic resources for food and agriculture for human health, notably as they contribute to food security and nutrition. The preliminary conclusions of the report helped inform discussions of the topic at CBD COP-12 and adoption of decision XII/21 that recognized the relevance of the cross cutting initiative on biodiversity for food and nutrition¹⁰ for the linkages among biodiversity, food, nutrition and health and emphasised the relevance of the interlinkages between biodiversity and human health for the post-2015 United Nations development agenda and the sustainable development goals, and, in this context, invited Parties and other relevant stakeholders to consider the information in *Connecting Global Priorities: Biodiversity and Human Health, A State of Knowledge Review* to identify opportunities for mutually supporting implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans and national strategies, plans and programmes for human health.

21. COP-12 (decision XII/21) also requested the Secretariat of the CBD to: prepare a report on the implications of the findings of the report for the work under the Convention for consideration by a meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technical Advice; monitor the results of the second International Conference on Nutrition and to report on possible points of cooperation with the Convention; carry out relevant activities for the development of indicators on biodiversity and human health; continue efforts under the joint work programme between the Secretariat and the World Health Organization, including regional capacity-building workshops in additional regions, on the interlinkages between biodiversity and health; report the results of collaborative work on biodiversity and health to the 68th World Health Assembly, as well as to the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting; and, further strengthen collaboration on the interlinkages between biodiversity and health with other relevant organizations, including with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

¹⁰ Decision VIII/23